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The Tabernacle and Contextual Worship

Abstract

Christians today sometimes debate the propriety of contemporary worship styles. Examining features of Exodus's tabernacle in light of cultures surrounding ancient Israel offers one biblical model for contextual worship. These features reveal that this model was relevant to its cultural setting. Some contextual elements fit Israel's setting merely out of necessity or expediency. Other elements employ existing forms, sometimes even from non-Israelite religious practices, to communicate a point intelligible within that cultural sphere. Still other elements show striking contrasts with surrounding cultures, contrasts highlighted all the more conspicuously by the aforementioned similarities. Noticing which elements are similar and which elements differ is also important: the contrasts appear especially at the level of fundamental conceptions about God.

These observations suggest that many aspects of a given culture's forms may be adapted in worship. What must be maintained, however, is the holiness of the true God and the ways that God invites worship. Thus, for example, music styles are culturally shaped rather than universal; no one style should be imposed on all worshipers. At the same time, worship practices should never lose sight of what worship should be about: honoring the one true God in the Spirit and in truth.

Key words: Tabernacle, contemporary worship, worship, contextualization, syncretism

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More than a decade ago I asked my good friend and respected missiologist Samuel Escobar where biblical scholars could be most useful for missiologists. He replied that we could help define the appropriate boundaries between contextualization and syncretism. For those of us who work especially in understanding Scripture in its ancient cultural contexts, virtually every page of the Bible offers models addressing this question.¹ In this article, however, I limit myself to one area where contextualization has become a matter of considerable debate in the church, namely, the degree to which it is appropriate in models of worship. Given my calling and area of expertise, as a biblical scholar, I will expend most of this article elaborating a biblical model, reserving my comment on the model's relevance especially for the end of the article.

One could examine multiple models of contextualized worship in ancient Israel; for example, the overlap between some biblical psalms and those of Israel's neighbors, even down to some matters of detail, is substantial.² Likewise, a number of Israel's rituals and even some categories of sacrifice evoke those of her neighbors, although some contrasts also stand out starkly.³ For the sake of brevity, however, I focus here on the model of the tabernacle that God provided Israel.⁴

The Tabernacle's Contextual Relevance

In this article, I am assuming rather than arguing for an Egyptian setting for the biblical material about the tabernacle, an argument that would require much space to develop more fully. Nevertheless, those who assign the material to a later period and a different setting would still find many points of contact with surrounding cultures, not changing substantially the primary point of this article. In what follows, I move from correspondences with the culture that may simply reflect expediency to those that clearly borrow surrounding cultures' religious symbolism, and then turn to contrasts on a more fundamental theological level.

Although modern readers may find the description of the building of the tabernacle laborious reading, the building of temples was a matter of literary interest in antiquity.⁵ The design of Israel's tabernacle shares features common to many ancient shrines, and this commonality should not surprise us. Had the design been completely foreign, the tabernacle could not have been intelligible to them. To help the Israelites understand the tabernacle as a holy place, God drew on models with which they were already familiar.

The nearest model for a people who had just experienced slavery in Egypt (as mentioned above, a history I am here taking for granted rather than expending space to argue) would be Egyptian temples, although many features appear much more widely than in Egypt alone. Undoubtedly many Israelites knew what Egyptian temples looked like; presumably Pharaoh

exploited their labor in his many temple construction projects in the Delta region.⁶ Not surprisingly, the tabernacle follows known Egyptian construction practices.⁷ Egyptians possessed all the requisite tools and skills necessary for such a structure, and had employed the building techniques depicted in the biblical narrative for up to fifteen centuries before the period that the narrative describes.⁸ For example, Egyptians also treated animal skins for uses like the tabernacle, and in this case our knowledge of their methods helps us understand how the Israelites likely prepared their skins. Egyptians prevented skins from becoming stiff by soaking them, drying them outside, and then pulling them back and forth over a wooden or metal blade set in a stake.⁹

Practicality. Some of the features of the tabernacle admittedly tell us more about practicality than about contextualization. Naturally the materials that Israel had available were those that they had brought from Egypt (e.g., Exod 12:36) or those that could be acquired in the Sinai desert; most of these materials are attested in use in the Sinai region, including even dolphin skins.¹⁰ Nomads in the region have continued to preserve the tradition of using goat hair for tents, because it thickens when wet, it adds protection in harsh weather.¹¹ All the dyes used in the tabernacle were available in Egypt and Egyptians had practiced dyeing for perhaps two millennia by this period.¹² Red dyes were common; blue and purple dyes, though rarer and far more expensive, were also available in Egypt.¹³

Egyptians had long been skilled in working with both bronze and gold, the latter both as solid gold (as in the tabernacle's mercy seat and lampstand) and for gold overlay (as with other objects in the tabernacle). Egyptians were in fact known throughout the ancient world for their skill in gold overlay.¹⁴ By modern standards, what sources in this period mean by "pure" gold was only 72.1% to 99.8% pure, usually referring to natural rather than refined gold.¹⁵ Nevertheless, we may distinguish the "pure" gold used on the furniture from the simple "gold" on the planks of the tabernacle.¹⁶ For contextual reasons that I shall seek to elaborate below, the most expensive materials (here pure gold) were generally used nearest the ark.

Solomon's later temple employed cedar wood from Lebanon, a choice wood used in the famous mythical temple of Baal. By contrast, the wilderness tabernacle employed acacia wood. The reason is practical: that is the kind of wood most available in the Sinai desert. Cedar, by contrast, was not available in the Sinai, and even in Egypt had long been imported.¹⁷ Wood provided only a portable supporting structure for the covering, however. The tabernacle was a tent-shrine, and such shrines had a long history in Egypt.¹⁸ Limited evidence survives for them outside of Egypt as well.¹⁹

More deliberate contextualization. With or without Egyptian models, only a tent sanctuary would be sufficiently portable to allow Israel's travels in the

wilderness. The model was a practical one, and its additional theological significance (cf. e.g., 2 Sam 7:6-7) is more open to debate. More striking in terms of contextualization is the three-part structure of the tabernacle (outer court, inner court, and holiest place), moving from the front entrance to the innermost shrine in a direct axis. This structure differs starkly from the structure of most Mesopotamian models.²⁰ Some early examples of tripartite temples from the Levant exist, but this had long been the standard model for Egyptian temples.²¹ Not only the tabernacle's structure but also its placement in Israel's camp might evoke familiar cultural models. Thus the tabernacle remained in the center of Israel's rectangular camp, just as Pharaoh Ramses II's tent stood in the center of Egyptian military camps.²² (The structure of Ramses's tent also resembled the tabernacle.)²³

Much of the furniture of the tabernacle parallels what surrounding cultures expected in temples. Four-horned altars were pervasive (Exod 27:2; 38:2). Temples regularly included sacrificial altars, incense altars (to cover the stench of burning flesh), and lampstands (so the priests could see even in the inner sanctuaries).²⁴ Tables for offerings also appear widely, for example in Assyrian, Hittite and Minoan cultures.²⁵ Even earthen altars (Exod 20:24) are not unique to Israel.²⁶

Similarities with Other Temples and the Theology of the Tabernacle

God's tent represented his presence with his covenant people (Exod 25:8); temples in antiquity were viewed as the dwelling places of deities.²⁷ In the ideology of most ancient Near Eastern peoples, temples localized the presence of the deity but did not limit it. Thus temples could reflect the deities' rule over the cosmos.²⁸ In some Egyptian temples, in fact, a blue ceiling studded with golden stars represented the vault of heaven, across which the vulture goddess spread her wings.²⁹ (Compare and contrast the winged cherubim portrayed on the tabernacle's curtains in Exod 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35.) Nothing in the existence of the temple should have caused Israel to forget that God's presence filled heaven and earth (1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2). Many scholars also believe that the earthly temples may have been designed to reflect the heavenly prototype, as many later interpreters believed (cf. Heb 8:5); both Canaanites and Babylonians modeled their earthly temples on what they believed the heavenly house of their deity looked like.³⁰

This much seems obvious to many modern readers, but we often miss the theological significance of some of the particular substances employed in its construction. While modern readers have often tried to allegorize the significance of colors and metals used in the ark, their real significance probably comes in their placement in the tabernacle, with the most expensive materials apparently used nearest the ark.³¹ Although blue dye appears elsewhere, "pure blue," the most expensive color in this period, is used only

to cover the ark (Num 4:6). Purple cloth covered less costly copper utensils; if, as some scholars have argued, extra skins were used only for bad weather, most of the outside of the tabernacle employed skins that had been dyed red, using the least expensive dye.³²

Likewise, the mercy seat was of pure gold (Exod 25:17) but the outer altar merely of bronze (38:30; 39:39). The highest quality workmanship is nearest the ark, as are the most expensive fabrics, dyes and metals.³³ As in many other ancient Near Eastern cultures, the more sacred an object was the greater the expense invested in it.³⁴ This gradation of holiness, built into the very structure of the tabernacle, indicated that God and the sacredness of his presence should be honored. He was thus to be approached with respect and awe.

This pattern also characterized the dwellings of deities as understood by surrounding cultures and applied to the gradation of entrants as well as of materials. In Egyptian temples, the outer courts apparently served the public, the inner court special devotees, and the innermost shrine was apparently reserved for priests or other consecrated persons.³⁵ The innermost shrine, on the main axis of the temple furthest from the entrance, was shrouded from the profane light of the world.³⁶ It was always the holiest place, or the "holy of holies."³⁷ The tabernacle, then, employs a conventional cultural way of expressing a deity's holiness, while applying this message to the true God. Indeed, the exclusion of all but the high priest once a year from the holiest place amplifies the symbolism of other temples to speak of a God whose holiness is absolute.

God's presence in the tabernacle of course went beyond these other analogies; its ideal as a locus for experiencing God's presence is exemplified particularly in Moses's intimacy with God there (Exod 33:9-11), a model used for Paul for his own ministry and, by extension, ideally for that of all Christians under the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6-18).

Contrasts with Other Temples and the Theology of the Tabernacle

That the tabernacle borrows various features from surrounding cultures serves to underline all the more conspicuously the contrasts with those cultures on more crucial points. Whereas similarities on secondary points could teach a theology analogous to the best parts of surrounding cultures (e.g., respect for a deity), the contrasts underline what is distinctive in Israel's God-given theology.

In Egyptian and other temples, the dramatic climax of the sacred architecture was the image of the deity above the sacred bark (the portable boat shrine in Egyptian temples) or another form of pedestal.³⁸ In the holiest place in Yahweh's tent, cherubim stood above the ark. These winged creatures may resemble similar images used as throne pedestals elsewhere

in the ancient Near East; thus Scripture often speaks of God enthroned above the cherubim (e.g., 1 Sam 4:4; 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; Ps 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16).³⁹ No image, however, appears above the cherubim, and the striking contrast in the face of so many similarities proclaims a distinctive theological message: “You are not to make for yourself an idol, or any image modeled after what is in heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters below the earth. You are not to worship them or serve them” (Exod 20:4-5, the second commandment).

Priests would awaken the image of the deity in the morning, then wash it, perfume it, clothe it, and offer food to it and entertain it. It would decide cases, enjoy an afternoon nap and at night be put back to bed.⁴⁰ Baal’s house included not only throne, footstool, table, and lamp, but also a chest of drawers and a bed.⁴¹ By contrast, there is no bed or chest of drawers in Yahweh’s temple, for the God of Israel never slumbers or sleeps (Ps 121:4). Whereas many other sanctuaries included tables for offering, as noted above, it is priests rather than the deity who consume the food on the table in Yahweh’s temple (Lev 24:6-9).⁴² Unlike other deities, the true God does not depend on his people to feed him (Ps 50:8-14).

Sometimes the cella at an Egyptian temple would be flanked by two or more shrines for other deities.⁴³ By contrast, Yahweh demands, “You are to have no other gods in my sight” (Exod 20:3, the first commandment). The tabernacle helps teach Israel the theology of the commandments that God was giving them.

The materials, techniques, designations and sometimes even theological symbols used for the tabernacle reflect resources available to Israel in that period; the contrasts, however, reveal a radical theological difference regarding the character of the holy and true God. It is precisely the tabernacle’s contextualization on other points that makes the contrasts most conspicuous.

Relevance of this Model for Today

Many debates in today’s church miss the heart of the message of the biblical texts they cite. For example, some Christians quote particular texts that appear to limit women’s ministry without recognizing the concrete historical situations those texts addressed. Some wield Jesus’s teachings on divorce, meant to protect the innocent from unjust betrayal, even against those who have been unjustly betrayed.⁴⁴ God’s call in Scripture is usually much simpler theologically and more demanding on our lives than such decontextualized approaches to Scripture allow. Scripture preaches its central message repeatedly, often modeling it in various ways for various concrete situations. Sometimes we focus on the past concrete models instead of the more fundamental message they dramatically communicated.

We may reproduce the same mistake in some of our modern debates about worship. The Psalms speak of a range of emotional expressions in worship, including dancing, loud celebration, and grief. Our debates can miss the point if we fix on the cultural mode (such as the style of music or forms of physical expression, say, clapping or genuflecting) instead of on the heart of what worship must involve.

This article's emphasis on contextual worship in ancient Israel (hence, by implication, contemporary music styles and the like) should not be understood as challenging the value of traditional forms of worship. Some of our traditions of worship today derive from earlier contextualizations, for an ancient Roman context (preserved in Roman Catholic and derivative forms), a Greek context (evoked in Eastern Orthodox icons), the Wesleyan revival's adaptation of contemporary tunes, and so forth. Such traditions can remain meaningful to those who understand or learn them, just as Israel's worship remained a valuable pedagogic heritage even as the cultures around them changed. For example, Solomon's temple adapted the tabernacle, including more Phoenician elements from the cultural milieu of Solomon's own era, but Solomon did not reject the inspired pattern of the tabernacle that Israel had inherited.⁴⁵ For another example, liturgy or structure on the one hand and charismatic inspiration on the other were compatible (1 Chron 25:1-6), though the latter could also exist independently (1 Sam 10:5, 10).

At the same time, the early churches met especially in homes, where ideally all believers were to minister to one another through divinely empowered gifts (1 Cor 14:24-26, 31). Although I do not have space to elaborate here, scholars have shown how contextual many features of their meetings were, adapted from synagogues, household associations and the like.⁴⁶ God's Spirit moved the early church from its primary focus on heritage to a new focus on mission; thus some NT writers worked to maintain connection with the legacy of the past while focusing on reaching the nations.⁴⁷ Likewise, while heritage remains important, each generation must be ready to recontextualize for new settings wherever this approach helps us appropriate more concretely what the message, in this case the worship of God, is all about. True contextualization does not conform the message to the culture, as syncretism would; it translates it into culturally intelligible forms in a way that confronts us with that message all the more meaningfully, whether the message agrees or disagrees with elements of our culture.

As evidence, one's own limited experience is merely anecdotal, but I close with it as an illustration nonetheless. As a recent convert from unchurched atheism, I encountered God's holiness, love and dramatic, transforming power in an astonishing way in a group of (mostly) fellow young people heavily influenced by the Jesus movement. As many as a hundred people packed into a home, and our apparel, contemporary music

style and most else about us reflected the culture of which we were a part. But God's Spirit moved so powerfully among us that we were in awe of his glory, and spiritual gifts revealed the secrets of people's hearts. This activity of the Spirit regularly brought unbelievers to Christ and led people, including myself, to repentance from and power over sin. Some of the deepest and most fundamental spiritual experiences of my life occurred in that informal context, not because or in spite of the culture but because of God's Spirit active there at that time.

In roughly the same period in my life, I used to visit the morning mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church in my home town; recently converted from atheism, I was too young in the faith to know that Christians who belong to one group usually disapprove of visiting another one. I do not know what others experienced there, but as I listened to the Scriptures recited in the liturgy, I felt God in that place, too, and in time the priest became one of my mentors.

I believe that God was ready to meet genuinely eager hearts in either setting, and that Scripture supports this understanding. When charged with speaking against "this holy place," the temple, Stephen quoted Scripture about a place that was holy in the backside of the Sinai desert, where God revealed himself to Moses (Acts 6:13; 7:33). I believe that what makes a place holy is not the culture or (in contrast to typical ancient Near Eastern views) the location. Instead, a place is holy if we encounter the living God there. In NT theology, it is we, and not a building, who are God's temple (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5; cf. Acts 7:48-50; 17:24; Rev 13:6).

Conclusion

Music styles, church architecture and the particular cultural dynamics of interpersonal relationships may change, but the holiness of the one true God remains nonnegotiable. The tabernacle represents both the nearness of God and the awe with which he must be approached, both God's immanence and his transcendence. We do not today express our recognition of these truths in the same way that the Israelites were called to, nor should we. Many forms used to invite people to worship most relevantly may vary from one culture and generation to another. The truths that the forms communicate, however, must never be neglected.

How can we discern the most effective ways to summon God's people to worship a holy and loving God? The nonnegotiable factor, and one that transcends culture, is that the worship is offered in the Spirit and in truth.⁴⁸ Undoubtedly that is because God is so worthy of honor that only worship that he empowers can be truly worthy of him. The NT contrasts earlier temples and cultic practices with a deeper experience that only a minority in ancient Israel tasted: to be truly the worship that

God desires, worship must be empowered by his Spirit (see John 4:20-24; Phil 3:3).

Endnotes

¹I address the data on a fairly basic level in *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), but on a more academic level in my more specialized academic commentaries.

²Long explored by scholars; cf. e.g., John Hastings Patton, *Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1944); more recently and with appropriate nuance, Tremper Longman III, "Psalms 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background," 593-605 in *Dictionary of the OT: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008). Note especially the oft-cited parallels between Ps 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to Aton in Egypt.

³See e.g., Richard E. Averbeck, "Sacrifices and Offerings," 706-33 in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 712-13, 715-16, 718; Ugaritic texts in Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Ras Shamra and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 57.

⁴Although my primary expertise is in the NT, I addressed the tabernacle more briefly in "Tabernacle," 837-40 in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (ed. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998); and at greater length with Glenn Ury in *Defending Black Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 139-46. Undoubtedly my OT colleagues could add further insights.

⁵Cf. Baal's palace in the Baal epic; for Egypt, Alexander Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: The Empire* (1580-1085 B.C.) (Berkeley: University of California, 1968), 161, 172-73; generally, Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York: Norton, 1965), 275. For divine instructions for such buildings, see Gudea Cylinder A (Umberto Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus [trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes/Hebrew University, 1967], 322; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961], 277); in Egypt, Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 120; in Babylonia, Vaux, Israel, 277.

⁶For the many temples there, see Badawy, *History of Egyptian Architecture*, 189.

⁷E.g., reckoning dimensions in multiples of ten (John Atwood Scott, "The Pattern of the Tabernacle" [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978], 109, 315).

⁸Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Bible in its World: The Bible and Archaeology Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1978), 85-86; cf. Benjamin Mazar, ed., *Views of the Biblical World* (New York: Arco, 1959), 1:172, 174; Scott, "Pattern of Tabernacle," 311-12.

⁹R. J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology* (9 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955-1966), 5:24-25.

¹⁰For the Delta's wealth, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Some Egyptian Background to the Old Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 516 (1960): 12; for the accessibility of all the skins and other substances in the Sinai region, see Scott, "Pattern of Tabernacle," 25-30, 38-45, 310.

¹¹ Regarding nomads' tents, see Claus Schedl, *History of the Old Testament* (5 vols.; Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1973), 2:153; regarding thickening, Scott, "Pattern of Tabernacle," 25.

¹² Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, 4:139

¹³ See e.g., Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, 4: 102-110; Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 159-60.

¹⁴ Menahem Haran, "The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 36 (1965): 191-226, here 201.

¹⁵ Mazar, Views, 1:175; Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, 8: 174; A. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (4th ed.; rev. J. R. Harris; London: Edward Arnold, 1962), 229.

¹⁶ Haran, *Temples*, 158.

¹⁷ Mazar, Views, 1: 161; also noted by Cassuto, Exodus, 328. Contrast Ziony Zevit, "Timber for the Tabernacle: Text, Tradition and Realia," 136-43 in Avraham Biran Volume (ed. E. Stern and T. Levi; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/Hebrew Union College, 1992), but it is not clear how long these conditions obtained. Cf. acacia's usefulness for the altar in Scott, "Pattern of Tabernacle," 215-16.

¹⁸ E.g., Kitchen, "Egyptian Background," 8-11; Harold H. Nelson, "The Egyptian Temple," 147-58 in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (ed. G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman; Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), 148-49; Carol Meyers, Exodus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 220, following esp. Michael M. Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! The Terminology, Function, Form and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 89-128.

¹⁹ For possible remains of tent-shrines, see Suzanne Singer, "From These Hills ..." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4 (2, June 1978): 16-25, here 20; John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 127; Yohanan Aharoni, *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel* (trans. Anson Rainey; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 136-37. Cf. Canaanite traditions, e.g., in Richard J. Clifford, "Tent of El and Israelite Tent of Meeting," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33 (April 1971): 221-27, here 222-25; cf. also Arabian traditions in Julian Morgenstern, "The Ark, The Ephod, and the 'Tent of Meeting,'" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 17 (1942-1943): 153-265, here 208-9, 216; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., "The Tabernacle: A Study from an Archaeological and Historical Approach," *Biblical Archaeologist* 10 (Sept. 1947): 45-68, here 60.

²⁰ Compare Mesopotamian models in A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Mesopotamian Temple," 158-69 in *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, 158-69; Seton Lloyd, *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 120; L. Delaporte, *Mesopotamia: The Babylonian and Assyrian Civilization* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 144-49. Cf. also the different model of Hittite temples in O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites* (2d ed.; Baltimore: Penguin, 1954), 145, 210.

²¹ In the Levant, see J. Gray, "Ugarit," 145-67 in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study* (ed. D. Winton Thomas; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 146-7; William G. Dever, "The MB IIC Stratifications In the Northwest Gate Area At Shechem," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 216 (Dec. 1974): 43; for Iron Age structures, Larry G. Herr, "Tripartite Pillared Buildings and the Market Place in Iron Age Palestine," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 272 (1988): 47-67. In Egypt, see e.g., Nelson, "Egyptian Temple," 147; Margaret A. Murray, Egyptian

Temples (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, n.d.), 2; idem, *The Splendor that was Egypt* (New York: Hawthorn, 1963), 235; Scott, "Pattern of Tabernacle," 314; Badawy, *History of Egyptian Architecture*, 176-77.

²² Cross, "Tabernacle," 55; Kitchen, "Egyptian Background," 11.

²³ See Richard E. Averbeck, "Tabernacle," 807-27 in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 818. The tripartite structure of Egyptian temples also characterized palaces.

²⁴ See e.g., Mazar, *Views*, 1: 163; Herbert Gordon May, *The Material Remains of the Megiddo Cult* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1935), 12-13; J. N. Schofield, "Megiddo," 309-28 in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, 322; I. E. S. Edwards, et al., eds., *History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region, c. 1380-1000 B.C.* (vol. 2, pt. 2 of *Cambridge Ancient History*, 12 vols., 3rd ed.; ed. J. B. Bury et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 858-60.

²⁵ Schedl, *History*, 154 n10; Gurney, Hittites, 188; Edwards, *History*, 859.

²⁶ Cf. most altars at Mari in André Parrot, "Mari," 136-44 in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, 138.

²⁷ G. Ernest Wright, "The Temple in Palestine-Syria," 169-84 in *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, 169-70; Meyers, Exodus, 220-21; Bruce Wells, "Exodus," 1:160-283 in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (5 vols.; ed. John H. Walton; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 247.

²⁸ Wright, "Temple," 172, 180.

²⁹ Lurker, *Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*, 120; cf. Badawy, *History of Egyptian Architecture*, 161; Nelson, "Egyptian Temple," 150-52.

³⁰ Clifford, "Tent of El," 226; Cassuto, Exodus, 322; Meyers, Exodus, 221. For a different approach, see Wells, "Exodus," 247-48.

³¹ G. Henton Davies, "Tabernacle," 4:498-506 in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 498-506; cf. also Haran, "Image of Tabernacle," 200-206; cf. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986), 205-6.

³² Cf. Haran, "Image of Tabernacle," 202; idem, *Temples*, 158-60.

³³ Davies, "Tabernacle," 501; Haran, "Image of Tabernacle," 202; cf. also idem, *Temples*, 160-61.

³⁴ Haran, "Image of Tabernacle," 206.

³⁵ Murray, *Splendor*, 235.

³⁶ Murray, *Splendor*, 235; Nelson, "Egyptian Temple," 147; Lurker, *Gods and Symbols of Egypt*, 120.

³⁷ Cf. this language in James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1906), 3:100 (no. 246), translating a source from the reign of Ramses II.

³⁸ In Egypt, Badawy, *History of Egyptian Architecture*, 177.

³⁹ Cherubim-like creatures appeared widely (e.g., William Foxwell Albright, "What Were the Cherubim?" *Biblical Archaeologist* 1 [1, Feb. 1938]: 1-3; Mazar, *Views*, 1:22, 162; "Treasures from the Lands of the Bible," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11 [2, March 1985]: 36-37). For their appearance in throne pedestals, see Edwards, *History*, 2:2: 600-601; Mazar, *Views*, 1:162; Cross, "Tabernacle," 63. For cherubim signifying that the ark is Yahweh's footstool, see also G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*

(2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 142; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 323; Haran, *Temples*, 254-55.

⁴⁰ Murray, *Splendor*, 183-84; Gurney, *Hittites*, 149-50; Meyers, *Exodus*, 221.

⁴¹ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 322-23.

⁴² See I. Abrahams, "Tabernacle," 15:679-88 in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (16 vols.; Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 682.

⁴³ Badawy, *History of Egyptian Architecture*, 180.

⁴⁴ I summarize only, having addressed these examples elsewhere, especially in *Paul, Women & Wives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992); *...And Marries Another* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991); and "Remarriage for Adultery, Desertion, or Abuse," 103-19 in *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church: 3 Views* (ed. Mark L. Strauss; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); "Women in Ministry: Another Egalitarian Perspective," 203-48 in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (rev. ed., ed. James R. Beck; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

⁴⁵ For Phoenician elements in Solomon's temple, see e.g., Wright, *Archaeology*, 137-138; Volkmar Fritz, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us About Solomon's Temple?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13 (4, 1987): 38-49.

⁴⁶ See e.g., my *1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 96-98, 116-17; Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 241-49.

⁴⁷ Addressed in my forthcoming *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic); see more briefly, *Acts* (Immersion Bible Studies; Nashville: Abingdon, 2011), 9-10.

⁴⁸ On the meaning of this phrase, see discussion in e.g., my *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 608-9, 611-19; idem, "Holy Spirit," 159-73 in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (ed. Gerald R. McDermott; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 163-64.